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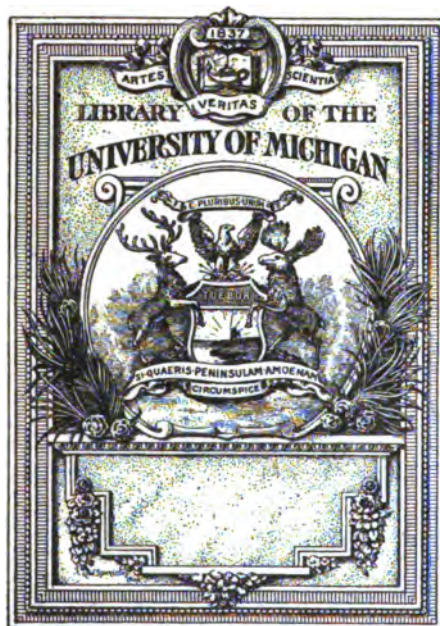
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Ode on the Anniversary of the
Fifth Half Century of the Landing
of Mr. John Endicott

By William W. Story.



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From Dr. S. A. Green.
Dec. 1883

Print'd Pamphlet 2-15

Boston Daily Advertiser



ODE

ON THE

ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIFTH HALF CENTURY

OF THE

LANDING OF GOV. JOHN ENDICOTT.

BY

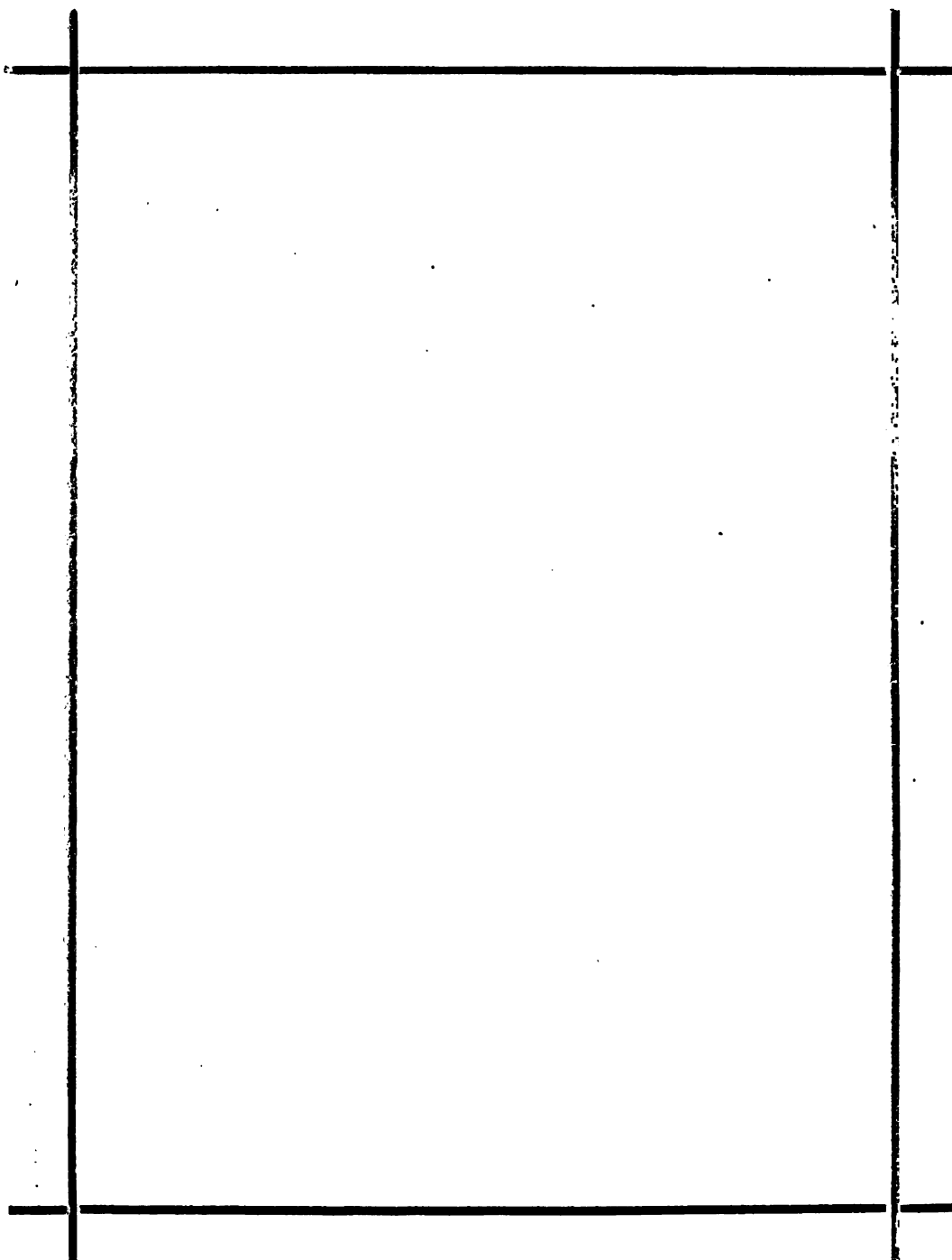
WILLIAM W. STORY.

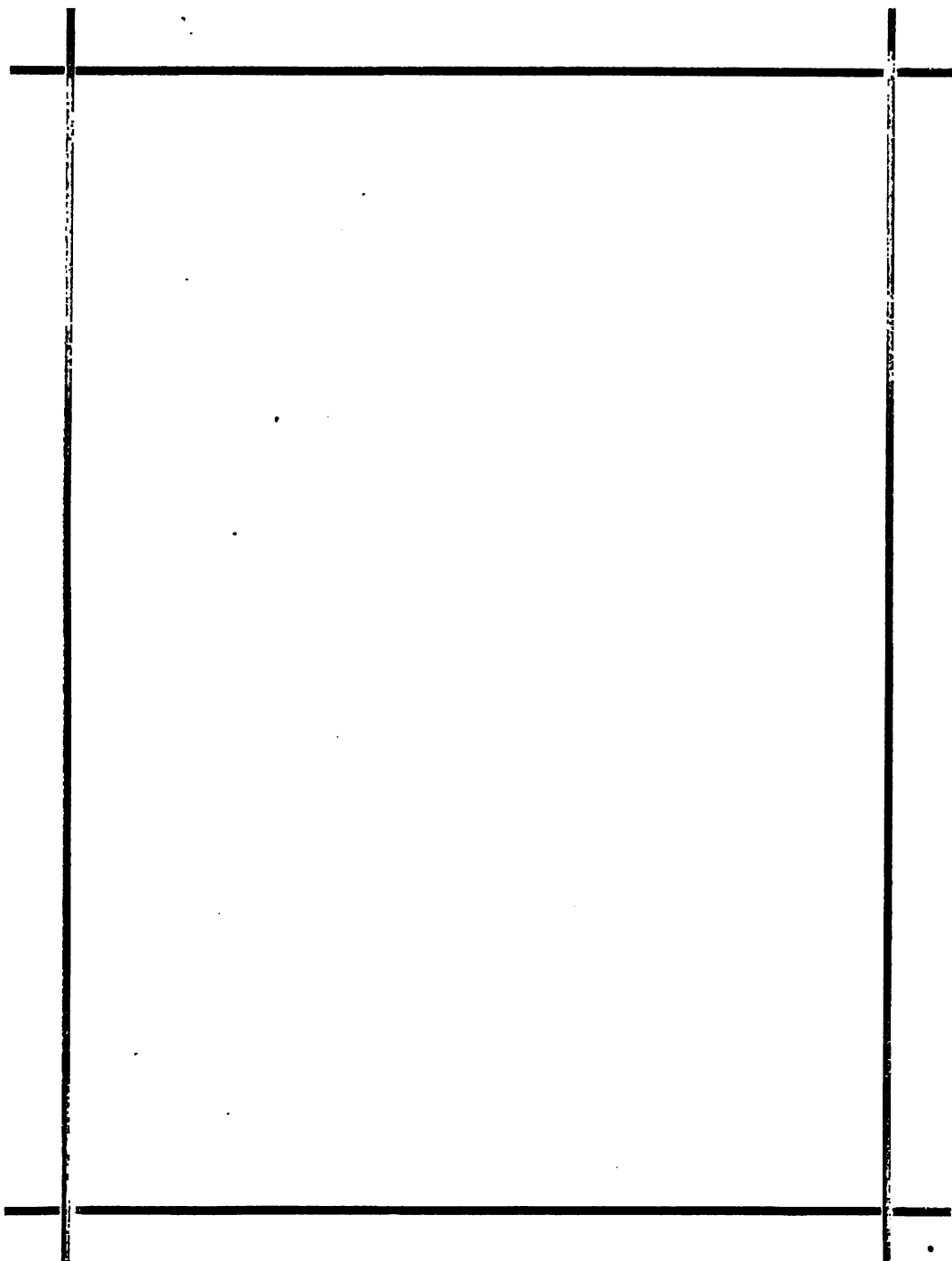
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SALEM: -

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ODE.

PRINTED AT THE SALEM PRESS, SALEM, MASS., 1878.

I SEND my voice from far beyond the sea ;
Only a voice—and therefore fit to be
Among the dim and ghostly company
That, from historic realms of shadowy gloom,
And from the silent world beyond the tomb,
This day shall come, their living sons to greet
With voiceless presence, and with noiseless feet,
To join the long procession in the street,
And listen to the praise
Of the old deeds and days
That in our memories evermore are sweet.

II

There the brave Endicott,
With jingling sword, high ruff, and magisterial coat,
August, shall lead the shadowy train —
And Higginson beside him there
With pilgrim primness and a brow of care,
Serene, and sad, and plain,
Shall breathe a silent prayer.
There Roger Williams pensive shall be seen,
Quiet of presence, gentle in his mien,

As erst he was, ere he was forced to flee
Before the cry of rabid bigotry.
There Saltonstall and Pynchon, Lynde and Fitch,
Stern Stoughton, humbled Sewell, shall be found ;
And over-zealous Parris, looking round,
Eager to catch a glimpse of some foul witch
Among the childish group who, at his side,
Gaze all about them shy and eager-eyed.
There, rustling in her stiff brocade,
High-heeled, erect and slim,
Lady Arbella with her figure staid
And manners prim ;
And following her, full many a maid, whose eyes,
Up-glancing from her downcast face,
Despite her Quaker dress and bashful grace,
Give warrant for the charge of witcheries :
A brave procession, free of worldly guile,
Stern in its aspect and with features grim,
Scarce knowing how to smile,—
All moving silently, and keeping pace
Unto a voiceless hymn.

III

And there, behold, with lofty feathered crest,
A dark bronzed face looks out among the rest,
As the procession slowly moves along—

That is old Massasoit, erect and strong,
With a brass coin upon his broad bare chest;
Open his look as when
He met the Pilgrims on the shore with "Welcome
Englishmen!"
And there on either hand,
With frowning faces, stand
Brave Alexander, Philip, and their friend
Canonchet, brooding o'er the fate
That kingdom, home, and hearth made desolate,
And drove them to their sad and bitter end.

IV

And, since for all that pass the time is short
For full report,
Leap we two centuries, to note the name
Of some, who, on our Pilgrim roll of Fame,
Have later but not lesser claim.
Those who but fifty years ago
Walked in the flesh with us, when we
Closed up our city's second century
That now no more we know.

V

Dearest to me, and first of all the throng
That slowly moves along,

Is one belovéd form, with face benign,
Whose birthday fell on the same day of thine,
Oh pleasant town of mine !

'Tis the great Jurist : all his features bright
With an illuminating inner light,
Whose voice that day the story old
Of pilgrim faith and strength so nobly told,—
The good, wise man, who had the power to draw
All hearts, as by a charm ;
Whose high clear spirit, dry with wisdom's light,
With love's rich tints, was warm.

There, not unknown to fame,
Goes Dane, whose liberal bounty laid
In Harvard's academic shade,—

The school which bears his name ;
And, by his great abridgment to the law,
His full debt doubly paid.

There Bowditch, who with keen and patient eye
Traced the far planet's pathway in the sky,

And man's across the sea ;
Whom every sailor, tossing on the main
In danger or distress,
Hoping to see his dear ones once again,
Names but to bless.

There Holyoke, still erect and firm, we see
Under the full weight of a century.

There Pickering ; Pickman. There the clustering hair
And flashing eyes of Choate, whose rare
Full-worded eloquence had power to thrill,
And move, and mould his hearers at his will.
There too are Phillips, Silsbee, Saltonstall ;
Putnam and Crowninshield, and King, and White,—
Good men and true, to battle for the right
At bar, bench, and the nation's council hall.
There Hawthorne, in whose subtle glance
Are silent worlds of mystery and romance ;
A boy as yet, shy, modest in his mien,
Pondering the passing scene.

There the two Prescotts,—*not* he of the sword,
Who the great battle fought for Liberty,
For he was of the older race,—but he
Who wore the ermine of the bench, whose word
Was justice,—and the younger one whose pen
Painted the pomp of Spanish chivalry,
Battles and conquests, and brave deeds of men
Sailing across the almost untried sea.

There Upham, who our annals wrote ; and there
Our merchant princes all, whose argosies
Ploughed with their keel the torrid Indian seas
Rich spoils to us to bear.

And, foremost, Rogers and the Peabodies :
And following them, perchance more known to fame,

Yet only worthy of his name,
He who with broad and open hand
Scattered its wide largess
Over his native and adopted land,
The ignorant to teach—the poor to bless.

VI

These are our dead ! a glorious company
That have before us gone,—some many a year,
Some as it were but yesterday,—and we,
Their living sons, to-day bring up the rear.

VII

Here on this day, then, when we meet,
These shades august to greet,
And sun us in their shining memory,
Let us our vows record,
Never by act or word
To shift our shoulders from the weight
They laid on us, of Liberty.
Now, while their spirits gather near,
Let us from them take heart, and cheer
And pledge our utmost will and skill
High up to hold, with spirits bold,
The task they planned we should fulfil,
No cravens recreant to our trust,

No cowards shrinking from the fight,
But ready, through life's toil and dust,
To combat for the Right !
Ready, with heart and hand, to strive
To keep the ancient faith alive,
And bear us, so that our New England name,
Through us, shall never suffer shame.

VIII

Weak are we, and in numbers few,
Heroic deeds to dare and do ?
Well, so were they, the tried, the few
Who braved the sea, the storm, the bleak
Wind-hunted coast,
On these inhospitable lands to seek
The freedom that we boast.
Who bade farewell to homes and friends,
To arts, to luxury, to ease,
Ready to brave the blind, wild, weltering seas ;
The icy shafts that cruel winter sends ;
Horrors of savage war, black nights
Startled by war whoops, hideous sights,
Perpetual fears that prowled like phantoms dim
Round every hope ; perils unknown and grim ;
The face of famine, that with hollow eye
Glared into every household's privacy :

All this—and more than this—intent
To plant upon this stern, far continent,
The seed, the precious seed, of Liberty.

IX

With stern sincerity they wrought,
With pious trust and earnest thought,
With dauntless courage and determined will;
And if that sternness had its evil side,
And through excess of zeal grew narrow-eyed,
And bigoted, and hard,
Their errors were to virtues close allied,
That no low passions marred.
For this we praise them—nobly straight they stood
Their duty to fulfill.
Firm to their faith, whatever might betide
Of good or ill—
For this we glory, that within our veins
Runs their strong blood—
For this forgive the cruelty that stains
Their very faith to God.

X

Grim was their creed: for them the flower
Had scarce a right to bloom;
Beauty and joy they deemed the devil's dower

To tempt man to his doom.
And life a sad procession of gray hours
That led but to the tomb.

XI

Even as I speak, behold, with plaintive eyes
What sorrowing phantoms rise !
That superstition, hid behind the cloak
Of pious duty, and, in God's own name,
Struck with its deadly stroke.
See, there ! that peaceful Quaker band
That, from their hearth and home, and land,
Sharp persecution drove.
To whom our fathers stretched no Christian hand
Of favor, grace, or love.
And that even sadder, darker group behold !
Fair maidens, children in the first fresh bloom
Of their young life, old men and matrons old,
Tottering upon the threshold of the tomb.
What was their crime ? their cruel doom ?
Ah, well may we uplift our eyes
In sorrow and surprise !
These are the devil's wretched brood,
That expiated with their blood
The crime of witchcraft, and foul sorceries.

XII

Sad is the sight : let us avert our gaze.
And yet most sad for this, that through the maze
Of all this tangled skein of cruelties,
Blindly astray, threading the bigot way
The clue of virtue lies.
Narrow of mind they were, and short of sight,
And still to duty true.
In wrong ways ever striving for the right
They meant God's work to do.

XIII

Two long half centuries since then have passed,
And now, what wondrous change !
Cities are broadcast sown through the wide range
Of what was savage desert, drear and vast,
Where, through the wilderness, hissed now and then
The Indian arrow, or the passing breeze
Shook the primeval forest's serried trees,
Rings now the whirl and busy hum of men :
The rattling train,—with streaming snake of steam
And fiery eyes agleam,—
Shakes all its silences with rush and roar,
And shoots its shuttles, weaving shore to shore ;
Gone is the dark face, and the cautious tread
That stole upon its game or on its foe :

A horde of pale-faced men, since born and bred,
Swarms everywhere from Maine to Mexico,
Builds, weaves, dams up the torrents in their flow
To turn the whirring mills to grind them bread ;
Sows leagues of seed, beats out the golden grain,
Tunnels the hills, speeds it across the main,
And, prisoning in the hold a fiery slave,
Bids him his huge arms heave,—and o'er the wave
The ship, beneath the flaming fire by night,
And pillared cloud by day,
Across the desert ocean's pathless plain
Throbs on its pulsing way.

XIV

How vast a change is this ! and yet more vast
Another change that o'er our world has past.
For savage Liberty that then uncurbed
Knew only power as might,
A strong republic we have shaped and orb'd
To justice, law and right.
This is our boast, not only we are free
But free through Law, and scorning to be free,
Through aid of any wrong,
We, for the great hopes of humanity,
Our state have builded strong.

XV

Is this the truth, or but an idle boast?
On days like this it fits us to make pause,
Look to our armour, test its strength and flaws;
See where we stand, what we have gained, what lost,
Take counsel, weigh our cause.

XVI

And pausing now, and looking round,
Boasting apart, can we affirm
That we are whole and sound?
Or must we, even while we see
Our large proud marches of prosperity,
Abase our eyes, and own, that, while our growth
Is mighty in material things,
The soaring virtue of our brave stern youth
Flies low on wounded wings?

XVII

Alas! the hymn to which our fathers trod
With even step, the inspiring cry
With which they marched to liberty,
Their trumpet note, "Man only can be free
When he is just to man and true to God,
Virtue alone is true prosperity"

This wakes faint echoes in our bosoms now
Our faith is weaker, our desires more low ;
Let us be rich, we cry, wealth is the prize,
That Freedom, drugged with greed and luxury,
Holds up before our eyes.

From the stern virtues that our fathers knew
We turn with easy sneers,
The trumpet tone that stirred them through and through
Jars harshly on our ears.

We can be bought and sold,—we have struck palms
With treachery and fraud,

Dishonesty corrupts us with its arms

And Bribery flaunts abroad ;

Sly Knavery, disguised, prowls like a fox
Around our politics ;

The juggler's hand is in our ballot-box,
While Office wins by tricks.

The simple homely ways

We knew in early days

Have lost their zest and beauty in our eyes ;

Corners, we have, and rings,

Where speculation hid in ambush lies

And on the unwary springs—

New vices bred new names.

And in the public mart the bull and bear

Wrangle and fight, and lie and tear,

And commerce for a swift advantage, games.
Folly in diamonds leads the social dance,
Half dressed and over free,
With the frail brood of wild Extravagance
And reckless Vanity.

XVIII

Is this our great Republic? This the flower
Of that high faith our fathers planted here?
This the heroic spirit, and severe,
They left us for our dower?
Are we so fallen, we neither care nor heed
Whither our great republic drifts, so long
As we on lotus flowers may lie and feed
And listen to Corruption's syren song,
Heedless of rocks and shoals that stretch before,
And trusting only Luck in time of need
To hold the helm upon a wild lee-shore?
What though our captain may be brave and true,
Or those the highest trust who hold,
If mutineers are in the crew
And scuttlers in the hold?

XIX

Ah no! it is not written in the book of Fate
That heedless as we are, and blind,

This glorious ship on which are set
The eyes, the hopes, of all mankind,
This great republic, with its precious freight,
That bears the flag of freedom at its peak,—
This hope our fathers launched with hearts elate
With fears, and prayers and sighs,—
Through our gross negligence should suffer wreck
In clear and cloudless skies.

XX

If the frail Mayflower could endure the stress
Of wind and tempest, on its venturous way,
With few to care and almost none to bless,
Bravely, without dismay,
Shall our strong ship, for want of worth and will,
Well-timbered, well-appointed, framed with skill,
Founder at last through utter recklessness?

XXI

No! foreign war hath struck at us in vain,
We have withstood the sterner, deadlier strain
Of fierce fraternal strife;
We have worked out, with spirits stout and brave,
Through our heart's blood, redemption for the slave
Heedless of cost and life.
We have cast off his chains into the sea,



And purged us of the curse of slavery.
And, now, it is not to be even thought,
That we, who deeds like this have wrought,
While in the bay of peace we lie
Without a menace from the sky,
Should perish from internal rot.

XXII

It is not that within our land
Is lack of spirit, brave and high,—
Of lofty magnanimity,—
Of pure heroic temper fit
For actions large and grand.
Who, that behind shall cast his eyes
To that sad page of civil strife
With all its stern brave sacrifice,
Its faith that o'er defeat could fly,
Its stubborn strength, its scorn of life,
Such temper can deny?
It is the spirit of delay,
The careless trust, that happy luck
Will save us, come what may,—
The apathy with which we see
Our country's dearest interests struck,
Dreaming that things will right themselves,
That brings dismay.

(20)

W. D. L.

XXIII

No! things will never right themselves,—
'Tis we must put them right.
Strip for the task, do the good work,
Labor with love unite,
Fall into line, and fight!
While half the honest, wise, and strong,
Apart in selfish silence stand,
Hating the danger and the wrong,
And yet too busy to uplift their hand
And do the duties that belong
To those who would be free.
Our great republic, soiled in name,
Is sliding down the dire declivity
Of ruin and of shame.

XXIV

Here, then, upon this day
So consecrate to memories of the past,
And hopes and fears that o'er the future cast
A dim and doubtful ray,
I call upon you, noble men and true,
High, low, young, old, wherever you may be,
Awake! arise! cast off this lethargy!
Your ancient faith renew,
And set your hands to do the task

That freemen have to do ;
 Cleanse the Augean stall of politics
 Of its foul muck of crafts and wiles and tricks ;
Break the base rings where commerce reeks and rots ;
Purge speculation of its canker spots ;
Drive off the cruel incubus that squats
 Upon our sleeping country, till it rise
Renewed in strength, with upward looking eyes,
 And forward go upon the path
Of its high destinies.

XXV

If any love for liberty you bear,
If any pride in this dear land you share,
By all that love and pride, I pray you, swear
 To set her free ;
And make her record honest, white, and fair
 In sight of all humanity.

XXVI

Swift fly the years. Too swift, alas !
 A full half century has flown,
Since, through these gardens fair and pastures lone
 And down the busy street,
Or 'neath the elms whose shadows soft are thrown
 Upon the common's trampled grass,

Pattered my childish feet.

Gone are the happy games we played as boys !
Gone the glad shouts, the free and careless joys,
The fights, the feuds, the friendships that we had,
And all the trivial things that had the power,
When Youth was in its early flower,

To make us sad or glad !

Gone the familiar faces that we knew,
Silent the voices that once thrilled us through,

And ghosts are everywhere !

They peer from every window pane,
From every alley, street and lane

They whisper on the air.

They haunt the meadows green and wide,

The garden walk, the river-side,

The beating mill adust with meal,

The rope-walk with its whirring wheel,

The elm grove on the sunny ridge,

The rattling draw, the echoing bridge ;

The lake on which we used to float

What time the blue jay screamed his note,

The voiceful pines that ceaselessly

Breathed back their answer to the sea,

The school house, where we learned to spell,

The church, the solemn sounding bell,—

All, all, are full of them.

Where'er we turn, howe'er we go,
Ever we hear their voices dim
That sing to us as in a dream
The song of "Long ago."

XXVII

Ah me, how many an autumn day
We watched with palpitating breast
Some stately ship, from India or Cathay,
Laden with spicy odours from the East,
Come sailing up the bay !
Unto our youthful hearts elate
What wealth beside their real freight
Of rich material things they bore !
Ours were Arabian cargoes, fair,
Mysterious, exquisite, and rare ;
From far romantic lands built out of air
On an ideal shore
Sent by Aladdin, Camaralzaman,
Morgiana, or Badoura or the Khan.
Treasures of Sinbad, vague and wondrous things
Beyond the reach of aught but Youth's imaginings.

XXVIII

Glad were the days, now vanished evermore,
When to our eager eye

Some friendly key opened the Museum's door
To worlds of mystery.
There, wandering many an hour amazed
With greedy look, we lingering gazed
On treasures strange from many a foreign land,
Whose very names our childish fancy smote,
So vague were they and so remote,
As awful, startling, grand ;
Dim Madagascar, and the far
Lone stretches of black Africa,
Pagoda'd China, quaint Japan,
Bronzed Egypt, where the creeping caravan
Along the yellow desert lengthening files ;
Hot Borneo and the tropic isles,
Where summer burns, and spices grow.
Arabia, Malta, Spain and Mexico,
Silken Circassia, lovely land of dream,
And bright Brazil where painted parrots scream ;
Cyprus and Rhodes, and all the isles that sleep
In Grecian peace along the Ionian deep,
And turbaned Turkey with its barred Harem.
Wild Hottentot and stunted Caffre-land,
Swart Abyssinia, stately Samarcand,
Lands of the grove-like banyan and the palm,
Soft whispering seas of Polynesian calm ;
Siberia, black with battlements of pines,

Dwarfed Lapland, half asleep in buried snow,
Sad Upernavik, where, all winter, shines
No sun upon the dreary Esquimaux ;
All these their treasures sent for our delight,
To stir our fancy, and to charm our sight.

XXIX

There spread before us we could see
What worlds of curiosity !
Strange dresses—bead and feather trimmed—
High Tartar boots, and tiny Chinese shoes.
And all the slender craft that ever skimmed
The shark-infested Indian sea—
Catamarans, caiques, or birch canoes,
Tinkling pagodas strung with bells,
Carved ivory balls, half miracles ;
Strung necklaces of shells and beads,
Sharp poisoned spears and arrowheads,
Bows, savage bludgeons, cresces keen,
Idols of hideous shape and grin,
Fat, bloated spiders stilted high
On hairy legs that scared the eye ;
Great, gorgeous spotted butterflies,
And every splendid plumaged bird,
That flashes through the tropic skies
Or in the sultry shade is heard ;

All these, and hundreds more than these, we saw,
That made our pulses beat with a delighted awe.

XXX

How oft half-fearfully we prowled
Around those gabled houses, quaint and old,
Whose legends, grim and terrible,
Of witch and ghost that used in them to dwell,
 Around the twilight fire were told ;
While huddled close with anxious ear
 We heard them, quivering with fear,
And, if the daylight half o'ercame the spell,
 'Twas with a lingering dread
We oped the door and touched the stinging bell
 In the dark shop that led,
For some had fallen under times disgrace,
 To meaner uses and a lower place.
But as we heard it ring, our hearts' quick pants
 Almost were audible ;
For with its sound it seemed to rouse the dead,
And wake some ghost from out the dusky haunts
 Where faint the daylight fell.

XXXI

Upon the sunny wharves how oft
Within some dim secluded loft

We played, and dreamed the livelong day,
And all the world was ours in play ;
We cared not, let it slip away,
And let the sandy hour-glass run,
Time is so long, and life so long
When it has just begun.

XXXII

Alas ! though swiftly it has fled,
And gone are all the old familiar faces,
And few they are who lingering tread
The old familiar places,
Yet, still, those places we behold
Almost unchanged from what they were of old
Some fifty years ago ;
The demon of wild change, that o'er our land
Keeps hurrying to and fro,
Swift to efface without a lingering trace
Youth's happy landmarks, here hath stayed his hand ;
And, if hot industry has hurried by
To toil in busier marts,
And nervous commerce spread its wings to fly
To dizzier schemes and arts,
Here it has left us calm serenity
And peaceful hearts.
And thus, apart from crowded din and noise

And the fierce strife that spoils life's simplest joys,

Our dear old city worthily may claim

Her biblical old name,—

. 'City of Peace,'—And tranquil in her age,

By no wild passions and ambitions torn,

May calmly sit like to some honored dame

And read her youth's bright page,—

Happy to be at rest, unsoiled by shame,

Proud of the noble children she hath borne,

And looking forward still, with quiet heart

And ever upward aim,

To do her duty, and to act her part

Beyond the reach of blame.

